



## Michigan Catholic Conference poll shows overwhelming support for expanding school choice

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**By Dave Murray | The Grand Rapids Press**

LANSING – Michigan residents overwhelmingly support school reforms that give parents more educational choices, according to a poll sponsored by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

The group found across the board – and across the aisle – support for adding more charter schools and cyber schools, offering more school choice between districts streamlining dual enrollment opportunities.



The Michigan Catholic Conference, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church, commissioned the Lansing-based Marketing Resource Group **to survey 600 likely voters between Oct. 6 and Oct. 9 for opinions on a series of school reforms** that have cleared the state Senate and are now being debated in the state House Education Committee.

The survey found that 82 percent of the people surveyed responded in favor when asked, “Do you think that parents of children in failing schools should or should not be allowed to send their children to better performing schools in other districts?” with 68 percent strongly supporting the option.

The poll showed 83 percent of the people who identified themselves as Republicans backed expanding choice plans, with an identical number for Democrats. The figure was slightly lower, 79 percent, for ticket-splitting voters.

The percentages for union members – 81 percent – was only 1 percent lower than respondents who are not union members.

“Regardless of the respondent’s location, race, gender, union membership or party affiliation, the results of this survey clearly indicate that Michigan families have grown lethargic of the status quo and want the ability to choose where and how their children receive the best education possible,” said Paul A. Long, Michigan

Catholic Conference president and CEO in a release.

“It is the hope of the Michigan Catholic Conference that these polling numbers will help members of the Michigan Legislature look past what is a very small yet vocal minority of special interests, and listen to everyday parents and families who want better educational options for their children.”

The state House Education Committee is expected to hear more testimony about lifting the cap on charter schools authorized by state universities. **Democrats last week** raised concerns about transparency and accountability, and whether the charter schools provide options for all students.

The state **Senate last week approved a bill allowing** for the expansion of cyber charter schools – there are two such schools now – as well as bills affecting students who are enrolled in K-12 districts and community colleges.

A bill that would mandate districts participate in a school choice plan is still being debated in a Senate committee.

The Senate bills do not limit new charter schools to areas with failing schools, though that was the suggestion of Gov. Rick Snyder when he revealed his special message on education in April.

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